



# City of Woburn Massachusetts

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**Scott D. Galvin**  
*Mayor*

8/29/22

Dear Resident:

I am writing with a status update on our recent test results and the actions the City of Woburn is taking to address and remove the PFAS in our groundwater supply at Horn Pond. I understand and recognize the significance of the concerns you may have about PFAS and their potential impact.

“PFAS” stands for per and polyfluoroalkyl substances and can pose a public health risk. They are a group of thousands of manmade chemicals widely used since the 1950s in consumer and industrial products, including non-stick coatings and firefighting foams. Some PFAS are no longer produced in the United States, however, many household products have PFAS, such as stain and water repellant fabrics, nonstick cookware, polishes, waxes, paints, cosmetics, cleaning and other products. Because PFAS do not break down easily in soil and water, they are widely found in the environment. They often move from the environment into the food supply and drinking water. PFAS in the environment is a challenge across the entire U.S. and throughout Massachusetts. Many communities, large and small, are impacted.

The City first tested its water supply for PFAS in 2015, in accordance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) methods in effect at that time. In October 2019, in response to updated test methods, the City began routinely testing for PFAS in its wells and treated water. In April 2021, The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) established a new drinking water standard with a maximum contaminate level (MCL) of 20 parts per trillion (ppt.) for the sum of 6 PFAS compounds, called “PFAS6”. Over the past nearly three years of testing, the PFAS6 level in Woburn’s drinking water has averaged 17.7 ppt.

From January 1, 2022 thru June 30, 2022 (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> quarters) the City has been in compliance with the new state standard. The individual monthly results have ranged from 11.6 to 18.0 ppt. Our July sample results were invalidated by DEP due to third party laboratory quality control reasons. We are now experiencing the typical seasonal pattern for our water with a small uptick in the August results at 20.6 ppt. The compliance status for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2022 (July-September), will be determined after we receive results for the September sample.

PFAS6 Levels above the MCL of 20 ppt. do not automatically mean there is a public health risk. The 20 ppt. is based on conservative assumptions that consider the populations that could be most affected by PFAS6. The 20 ppt. also assumes that each person is substantially exposed to PFAS6 from other sources in addition to drinking water.

The DEP advises that those people in sensitive populations, which include pregnant women, nursing mothers and infants, and people diagnosed by their health care provider to have a compromised immune system should not drink or cook with water that exceeds 20 ppt. If you are an adult or older child, not in sensitive populations, you may continue to consume the water because the 20 ppt. value is applicable to a lifetime of consuming the water and shorter duration exposures present less risk.

In June 2022, the EPA issued updated Interim Drinking Water Health Advisories for 2 of the 6 PFAS compounds that are already regulated in Massachusetts. These interim Health Advisory Levels – which are non-enforceable and non-regulatory – are below levels that can actually be measured by current technology. EPA issued these interim advisories to protect public health and keep communities informed when new science becomes available. The health advisory levels were calculated to offer a margin of protection against adverse health effects and also take into account other potential sources of exposure to these PFAS beyond drinking water. **The EPA estimates that 80% of the exposure to PFAS is attributed to sources other than drinking water.**

The best way for residents and community members to reduce their potential health risks is to limit exposure to PFAS as much as possible **from all sources**. While the City is taking action to reduce PFAS in drinking water, the best action to decrease PFAS pollution is to purchase less PFAS-containing products. For more information on reducing PFAS exposure check out EPA's website: <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/meaningful-and-achievable-steps-you-can-take-reduce-your-risk>.

The City has worked closely with the DEP to comply with new testing, reporting and public notification requirements. We provide alerts on water bills and post the individual monthly results on the City website as they become available.

I have taken many of your phone calls and have heard the concerns you have expressed about the safety of your water. It can be hard for sensitive populations to get other water sources for consumption, including for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. **We have and are taking several actions to address the PFAS6 levels in the drinking water and their impacts, as follows:**

- A free water bottle filling station is available at the Senior Center on School Street.
- For people considered in a sensitive population (see above) who must purchase bottled water, the City will issue a monthly rebate for the water bill to be issued in February 2023 for the billing period of July 1, 2022 thru December 31, 2022. The rebate will be available for those periods we are non-compliant with the DEP drinking water standard of 20 ppt.

*Qualifying Residents can apply for the rebate on the City website beginning in January of 2023*

- We are upgrading our water treatment plant to treat and remove PFAS6. The initial engineering studies are complete and we are now underway with the design.
- We submitted an application for funding to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund on August 12 to subsidize the cost to construct the upgrades to our water treatment plant.
- We have scheduled a PFAS update for residents during The City Council meeting at City Hall on Tuesday, October 4, 2022 at 7:00pm, in the City Council Chambers.

If you have questions about your drinking water, please contact my office at 781-897-5907 or the City of Woburn Water Department at 781-897-5945, or visit the City website at <https://www.woburnma.gov/>

Sincerely;



Mayor Scott Galvin